DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 909 CS 507 389

AUTHOR Haun, Martha Womack
TITLE Communication Competency through Faculty Development.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (76th, Chicago, IL, November 1-4, 1990). Table 1 may not reproduce legibly.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Communication; *Communication Skills; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Interpersonal Competence; Questioning Techniques; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Improvement; Teaching Styles

ABSTRACT

Research on the communicative competency of faculty indicates that students can be motivated to learn by competent communicators. In general, communication experts have better competency skills, (i.e., they use more effective verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors) than do faculty as a whole. An area much in need of development for most faculty members is skill in asking questions. Teachers skilled in questioning techniques can move students back and forth through Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives. Too many faculty read from their notes, heads down, eyes focused on papers, with general disregard for the audience. Communication and power are integrally related and directly affect the classroom climate and subsequently the cognitive learning experience. (A table representing a taxonomy of behavior alteration techniques and behavior alteration messages is included.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"Communication Competency through Faculty Development"
Martha Womack Haun
Speech Communication Association
Chicago, Nov. 1-3, 1990

ED327909

CS507387

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Martha T. Haun

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"Communication Competency through Faculty Development"

Martha Womack Haun
Speech Communication Association
Chicago, Nov. 1-3, 1990

Introduction

The topic for the 1990 SCA Town Hall debate at this convention which addresses whether or not we should gather in annual session and force ourselves to listen to the potentially dry and boring papers delivered by our colleagues does, in fact, speak to the issue which we are addressing today in this session. Namely, are faculty members competent to communicate? More specifically, can we identify and address deficiencies in such a way that improvement is the end result? What is competency? What are the criteria by which one evaluates or measures the competency of another person? The answers to such questions are not simple ones and consequently will be only partially addressed in the time (ten minutes!) available to this author today.

Recognizing that students can be motivated to learn by competent communicators (Christophel, 1990), this paper addresses the perceived level of communication competency among faculty that presently exists, some specifics of the nature of competency, followed by a discussion of how communication competency can best be developed. More specifically, the focus will address how verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors of faculty members can be improved.

Competency and Motivation

Diane M. Christophel, author of "The Relationships Among Teacher Immediacy Behaviors, Student Motivation, and Learning," in *Communication Education,* October 1990, p. 337, in an article revised from a Top Three program in Instructional Development for this SCA convention concluded that *state rather than trait motivation was a crucial factor in impacting learning.* In her words, "the unique variance regarding students' motivation and learning was

CS507389

unequivocally attributable to state motivation. This finding strongly supports the theory that student state motivation levels are modifiable within the classroom environment." More importantly for our purposes, her study established that "a portion of student state motivation was directly modified by teacher immediacy behaviors."

Immediacy Behaviors

Such verbal immediacy behaviors included praising students' work, using first names, using humor and personal examples, initiating conversations with students before or after class, using third person pronoun references and asking questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors included gesturing while speaking to the class, looking at the class and smiling while talking, moving around the room, touching students, variety in vocal expressions and being relaxed. Excluded verbal behaviors were first person pronouns "my" or "I", asking questions that have specific, "correct" answers, criticizing or point out faults in students' work, actions or comments, and calling on students who have not indicated a desire to respond. Nonverbal behaviors that were presumed to be non-immediate included sitting behind the desk while teaching, using a monotone/dull voice, having a tense body position, sitting on a desk or in a chair while teaching, looking at board or notes while talking to the class, and standing behind podium or desk while teaching.

Authors Michael J. Beatty and Christopher J. Zahn concluded in their October 1990 article in *Communication Education* (p. 281) that "student ratings of teacher credibility are not influenced by perceptions of course performance" and that such ratings are not based merely on teachers' sociability. However, they found that "communication teachers who are perceived as nice, pleasant, kind, friendly, good-natured, cheerful, sociable, cooperative and honest, produce higher student expectations for performance." Their concluding observations are that "experts in communication *should*

be expected to be better teachers than those who are not experts" and that their "research supports the validity of that expectation." In the remarks that follow, we may then qualify observations to suggest that in general communication experts have better competency skills than the faculty as a whole.

Jerry L. Allen and Darla H. Shaw in the same issue of *Communication Education* focus their research on the instruction of elementary and secondary teachers and conclude that "affective learning was viewed as the domain where effective teaching was perceived to make the most difference," and that teachers with a high degree of WTC [willingness to communicate] were determinants of such effectiveness. (p. 320).

Competency Defined

W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen, *Communication Action and Meaning* (New York; Prager, 1980), p. 187 define competence as "the person's ability to move within and among the various systems s/he is co-creating or co-managing." Stephen W. Littlejohn, in *Theories of Human Communication* (2nd ed.), 1983, aptly sums up the idea by stating that "an optimally competent person can enter or exit a system at will," (p. 70) and in the 3rd edition of his book (1989) Littlejohn in summarizing the work of Juergen Habermas writes that communication is "essential to emancipation" and that language "becomes the means by which the emancipatory interest is fulfilled." Thus, "communicative competence . . . is necessary for effective participation in decision making" and "involves knowing how to use speech apprcpriately to accomplish . . . purposes." (p. 146)

Pamphlets from SCA headquarters as well as other sources provide guidelines for communicator competencies for individuals in different stages of development. For faculty members, competencies would naturally include classroom management abilities as well as skill in teaching subject matter using immediacy behaviors.

Skills Development

Recognizing that verbal immediacy behaviors included praising students' work and using first names suggests that attention needs to be directed to teacher response style. Several response style taxonomies are available. For example, David Johnson in his text *Reaching Out* identifies five: evaluative, interpretive, supportive, probing and understanding (p. 125).

J. Gibb, "Defensive Communication," *Journal of Communication, 11* (1961): 142-148, distinguishes between defensive climates (characterized by evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority and certainty) and supportive climates (characterized by description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality and provisionalism). Cooper (1988) lists thirteen characteristics of response styles which create a supportive, responsive climate which encourages student participation. These include accepting and developing students' ideas and feelings, praise, encouragement, listening, insuring success, being authentic and using a variety of responses. Using humor and personal examples or initiating conversations with students before or after class and even using third person pronoun references, require good relational skills between faculty and student.

Using Questions

It is this author's opinion that an area much in in need of development for most faculty members is skill in asking questions. Asking questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions are better received than questions at a lower cognitive level, the "knowledge/recall" level in particular. Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives, the teacher skilled in questioning techniques can move students back and forth through levels which include knowledge (list, label, define, tell), comprehension (compare, contrast, translate, paraphrase), application (solve, compute, produce, classify), analysis (distinguish, differentiate), synthesis (write, combine, create, design), and evaluation (assess,

evaluate, criticize, justify).

What happens to your own mental processes when a question is posed? What if I ask you, for example:

1. Is there a difference between a group leader and leadership?
2. By what process does a group actually solve a problem?
3. Can one evaluate policies without first addressing value clarification?
4. Where do butterflies go when it rains?
5. Why do we feel remorse killing a butterfly but not a cockroach?
6. How can we make a miniature flame-thrower from a match, a piece of paper and a packet of coffee creamer?

Could you feel your mental processes activated? Was this more refreshing that waiting to be automatically fed information about topics? A command of lower cognitive level skills is required before higher order thought can be accomplished. We must be able to identify and relate to objects before we can analyze, synthesize or evaluate them. How can we imagine touching a rainbow if we do not know what a rainbow is? How can we imagine a butterfuly on the underside of a leaf if we have no cognitive awareness of a butterfuly. How can we distinguish "wet" from "dry" snow If our knowledge and use of language is so limited that the concept "snow" is meaningless? Inherent in our effective and competent communication is an appreciation of our language, the ability to name objects and to increase our cognitive complexity as we relate to the world about us.

Using Communicative Reading

Cooper observes (p. 313): "No teacher should pass up the opportunity to read . . ., to introduce a unit, to help explain a concept, to motivate students, and to simply provide enjoyment. . . . " This author maintains that this is true in the college classroom as well as K-12. An excerpt from a great speech, a famous quotation, an excerpt of literature can convey the thought in a richer, fuller way

than characterizes the style of most teachers. Too many faculty read from their notes, heads down, eyes focussed on papers with general disregard for the audience. Training in communicative reading could improve overall delivery skills - with improved and appropriate variety in volume, rate, intensity and vocal quality. Learning to draw upon additional resources from literary sources can provide enrichment experiences for both students and faculty.

Understanding nonverbal immediacy

For too long the assumption was too strong that the essence of a teacher's communication lay in verbal messages delivered clearly to a captive audience. While creating appropriate meanings in the mind of receivers through effective symbolic interaction is crucial in the learning process, what we now know about the impact of nonverbal immediacy behaviors clearly indicates that faculty members at all levels need a clear understanding of kinesics, proxemics, chronemics, paralanguage, artifacts, touch, color, and other environmental factors with specific applications to the classroom.

Communication and Power

Communication and power are integrally related and directly affect the classroom climate and subsequently the cognitive learning experience. In their 1987 article in *Communication Education*, Richmond, McCroskey, Kearney and Plax identify Behavior Alteration Techniques (BATs) and Behavior Alteration Messages (BAMs) and link behavior alteration techniques to cognitive learning. Table 1 is a reproduction of the author's taxonomy of techniques with example messages. The following BATs were perceived as being "used by more good teachers than poor teachers: Immediate Reward from Behavior; Deferred Reward from Behavior; Reward from Teacher; Reward from Others; Self-Esteem; Personal (Student) Responsibility; Responsibility to Class; Debt; Altruism; Expert Teacher; and Teacher Feedback. The following BATs were perceived as being used by more poor teachers than good teachers: Punishment from Behavior; Punishment rom Teacher; Legitimate-

TABLE 1

BEHAVIOR ALTERATION TECHNIQUES AND MESSAGES

BATs	BAMs
1. Immediate Reward from Behavior	You will enjoy it. It will make you happy. Because it's fun. You'll find it rewarding/interesting. It's a good experience.
2. Deferred Reward from Behavior	It will help you later on in life. It will prepare you getting a job (or going to graduate school). It will prepare you for your achievement tests (or the final exam). It will help you with upcoming assignments.
3. Reward from Teacher	I will give you a reward if you do. I will make it beneficial to you. I will give you a good grade (or extra credit) if you do.
4. Reward from Others	Others will respect you if you do. Others will be proud of you. Your friends will like you if you do. Your parents will be pleased.
5. Self-Esteem	You will feel good about yourself if you do. You are the best person to do it. You always do such a good job.
6. Punishment from Behavior	You will lose if you don't. You will be unhappy if you don't. You will be hurt if you don't. It's your loss. You'll feel bad if you don't.
7. Punishment from Teacher	I will punish you if you don't. I will make it miserable for you. I'll give you an "F" if you don't. If you don't do it now, it will be homework tonight.
8. Punishment from Others	No one will like you. Your friends will make fun of you. Your parents will punish you if you don't. Your classmates will reject you.
9. Guilt	If you don't, others will be hurt. You'll make others unhappy if you don't. Your parents will feel bad if you don't. Others will be punished if you don't.
10. Teacher–Student Relationship: Positive	I will like you better if you do. I will respect you. I will think more highly of you. I will appreciate you more if you do. I will be proud of you.
11. Teacher–Student Relationship: Negative	I will dislike you if you don't. I will lose respect for you. I will think less of you if you don't. I won't be proud of you. I'll be disappointed in you.
12. Legitimate-Higher Authority	Do it. I'm just telling you what I was told. It is a rule. I have to do it and so do you. It's school policy.
13. Legitimate-Teacher Authority	Because I told you to. You don't have a choice. You're here to work! I'm the teacher, you're the student. I'm in charge, not you. Don't ask, just do it.
14. Personal (Student) Responsibility	It is your obligation. It is your turn. Everyone has to do his/her share. It's your job. Everyone has to pull his/her own weight.
15. Responsibility to Class	Your group needs it done. The class depends on you. All your friends are counting on you. Don't let your group down. You'll ruin it for the rest of the class (team).
16. Normative Rules	We voted, and the majority rules. All of your friends are doing it. Everyone else has to do it. The rest of the class is doing it. It's part of growing up.
17. Debt	You owe me one. Pay your debt. You promised to do it. I did it the last time. You said you'd try this time.
18. Altruism	If you do this, it will help others. Others will benefit if you do. It will make others happy if you do. I'm not asking you to do it for yourself, do it for the good of the class.
19. Peer Modeling	Your friends do it. Classmates you respect do it. The friends you admire do it. Other students you like do it. All your friends are doing it.
20. Teacher Modeling	This is the way I always do it. When I was your age I did it. People who are like me do it. I had to do this when I was in school. Teachers you respect do it.
21. Expert Teacher	From my experience, it is a good idea. From what I have learned it is what you should do. This has always worked for me. Trust me. I know what I'm doing. I had to do this before I became a teacher.
22. Teacher Feedback	Because I need to know how well you understand this. To see how well I've taught you. To see how well you can do it. It will help me know your problem areas.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teacher Authority; and Teacher Modeling (p. 7). " Used equally by both good and poor teachers were these BATs: "Punishment from Others; Guilt; Teacher/Student Relationship: Positive; Teacher/ Student Relationship: Negative; Legitimate-Higher Authority; Normative Rules; and Peer Modeling.

Looking Ahead

Faculty have diverse techniques available to motivate student learning. A strong commitment is what is required to break traditional instructional patterns in exchange for a more meaningful educational experience. The solution is relatively easy. Through convention programs such as this one, or institutionally sponsored weekend training sessions, or even single or half-day sessions, skills development may be taught by professionals. Administrators should be encouraged to develop reward systems that address improved communication skills. Training opportunities exist or could be easily created. The committment to improvement is the challenge. What will be the reply?

References

Allen, J. L. & Shaw, D. H. Teachers' Communication Behaviors and Supervisors' Evaluation of Instruction in Elementary and Secondary Classrooms. *Communication Education, 39,* October 1990, 308-322.

Anderson, J. F. (1979). Teacher immediacy as a predictor of teaching effectiveness. *Communication Yearbook 3*, 543-559.

Christophel, Diane M., "The Relationships Among Teacher Immediacy Behaviors, Student Motivation, and Learning," *Communication Education,* October 1990, p. 337.

Cooper, Pamela. *Speech Communication for the Classroom Teacher.* (1988) Scottsdale, AZ: Gorsuch-Scarisbrick Publishers.

Gibb, J. "Defensive Communication," *Journal of Communication, 11*

(1961): 142-148.

Gorham, J. (1988). The relationship between verbal eacher i mmediacy behaviors and student learning. *Communication Education, 37,* 40-53.

Johnson, D. (1972). *Reaching Out.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Littlejohn, S. W. *Theories of Human Communication* (2nd ed.), 1983.

Pearce, W. B. and Cronen, V. *Communication Action and Meaning* (New York: Prager, 1980), p. 187

Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., Kearney, P. & Plax, T.G. (1987) Power in the Classroom VII: Linking behavior alteration techniques to cognitive learning. *Communication Education, 36,* 1-12.

Sanders, J. A. & Wiseman, R. L. The effects of verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy on perceived cognitive, affectrive, and behavioral learning in the multicultural classroom, *Communication Education, 37,* 341-353.